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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes a number of successful solutions that have been used in schools involved in school improvement planning. Problem-solving strategies used by schools across the United States to address various situations are described, in which each school focused on student achievement and teaching learning for all students. The practices, based on effective schools research, were utilized in seven elementary schools, six junior high and middle schools, five high schools, and one school district. Programs, each of which is described in this report, addressed leadership training, alternative learning, reading improvement, participative action research, at-risk students, student mediation, individualized tutoring, mathematics achievement, and parent involvement. Data-based results are described and a contact source for each school is provided. (LMI)

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Practices That Work

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Barbara C. Jacoby

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Practices That Work

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Lawrence W. Lezotte and
Barbara C. Jacoby

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EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

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Foreword

"Have other schools faced problems like ours? What did they do about them?"

"Who can we call to learn about practical suggestions that work?"

As we travel around the country we frequently hear similar questions from teachers and administrators who are involved in planning for school improvement based on effective schools research. This monograph was compiled in order to help answer such questions.

Effective Schools Practices That Work is, in fact, a small compendium of *hope*. In each instance, schools focused on student achievement—or the lack thereof—then suspended "business as usual" and took on the challenge of directly committing their energies to *teaching for learning for all.* This book documents a number of successful solutions which schools have found for a wide variety of problems, and reveals the creativity and problem-solving abilities of today's educators.

The description of each practice is designed to provide a snapshot of an identified problem and give a concise account of the new practice which addresses the problem. Data-based results are then described, along with additional pertinent

comments. The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person at the school or district is also listed for your use, should you wish to obtain further information.

This book would not exist if teachers and administrators had not taken the time and effort to capture their best practices on paper. Our thanks to everyone who let us know about the successes they are having with their school improvement efforts.

We wish you continued good luck in these endeavors, as you draw upon the wisdom and experience of others in initiating effective practices in your school.

— *Lawrence W. Lezotte*
Barbara C. Jacoby

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Elementary Schools

Less Time for Lunch, More Time on Task

Carrolltowne Elementary School

Demographics

- *Carrolltowne Elementary School, Sykesville, Maryland*
- *22,000 students/district, 950 students/building*
- *97% white, 3% other*
- *40% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

During my 20 years as an elementary school principal I have always viewed the "lunch hour" as a major disruption of the school's instructional program. Regardless of size, schools often begin serving lunches as early as 11:00 a.m. to their students and continue serving until 1:30 p.m. The total experience—getting ready, moving, eating, etc.—sometimes takes 45 minutes to one hour. In addition, there are noise and disruption in the cafeteria, and settling back to work after lunch takes up more time. All in all, we are taking a huge chunk of our instructional day feeding students, calming students, and readying them again for teaching time. This is a real waste each day of precious quality instructional time,

which is spent on providing a service that has very little to do with student outcomes.

New Practice

Since lunch must be provided for students during the day, Carrolltowne Elementary School has attempted to decrease the time and energy spent on this activity and increase the time spent on our true mission of schooling. Our lunch period starts as late as possible so our students can work productively with minimal inter-ruption during the morning hours. This is how we accomplish it:

9:05 – 12:20	Instructional Time, Language Arts/Math
12:20	First Grade Lunch
12:25	Second Grade Lunch
1:00	Third Grade Lunch
1:15	Fourth Grade Lunch
1:30	Fifth Grade Lunch
2:00	Lunch Ends
3:15	Dismissal

We have pushed back our lunch shift as late as possible in order to capture valuable morning instructional time that we use for subjects that are the most important in elementary school, language arts and math. The fifth grade finishes lunch at 2:00 p.m., leaving them one hour at the end of the day for science/social studies/health, etc. In order to accomplish this successfully, students in most grades eat a snack during a set morning time.

Results

We have found the following educational outcomes as a result of this program.

- Time on task increased 30 percent throughout the school.

- Students are alert and attentive during the times when the most important subjects are taught.
- Little time is wasted trying to get students to settle down and return to work after lunch.
- New ideas about where students should eat have emerged, i.e., some of the upper grade classes eat in their rooms.
- The morning learning block (three hours plus) has resulted in Carrolltowne being the only Chapter 1 school that does not have to develop program improvement plans in Grades 2 and 3.
- The entire staff is happier and more committed to learning, knowing that they don't have to spend endless time settling students for after-lunch studies.
- The community supports our effort by sending a nutritious snack with their students without complaining or resisting.

Comments

Since the beginning of the 20th century, schools have served lunch to students in the same way each day with the usual disruptive results. Continuing efforts should be made to study this issue to find ways to make this time more productive and meaningful for all. Why can't the lunch program be contracted out to food service specialists? By doing this, instruction and outcomes of students can be enhanced because of the increased staff time available to spend on learning strategies, and not on serving and monitoring lunch.

Contact:

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Parents as Resources and Decision Makers

Dearington Accelerated School

Demographics

- *Dearington Accelerated School, Lynchburg, Virginia*
- *9,230 students/district, 135 students/building*
- *94% black, 6% white*
- *76% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

Young at-risk Americans are dropping out. Out of school, out of the family, out of the work place, and, ultimately, out of society. In an attempt to reverse this trend and to deal with potential dropouts and at-risk students, the Lynchburg City Schools established a special program at Dearington Accelerated School because of the high percentage of students in these schools who were at risk of school failure.

Over 90 percent of the student population at Dearington are minority students. Approximately 67 percent of the student body was identified as being in danger of not completing their education because of a variety of factors. There was a wide discrepancy between the test scores of students at this school and those of students attending schools in the city's more suburban areas.

New Practice

The Successful Partnerships program was established to form a partnership between the school and every segment of the school's community in order to raise student achievement levels. The goals were to raise academic achievement, to improve self-esteem, and to encourage self-discipline.

We saw parent involvement as the most effective, immediate and critical need of the partnership. Steps were then taken to achieve that involvement through door-to-door campaigning, telephone canvassing, and group meetings at school and at the local housing project community center. During these home chats and telephone conversations the concept of the program was discussed with the community before it was presented to the school board.

Group meetings followed, first at the school and then at the local housing project community center. The latter were so well attended that space was a problem.

Some of the main points to which the group was most receptive were:

1. The school will return to being the focal point of the community.
2. A parent center and adult education will be offered.
3. Each school will become self-contained, prekindergarten through Grade 5.
4. An extended day program running until 5:00 p.m. five days a week would be established.
5. A prekindergarten for four-year-olds would be incorporated.
6. A clothes closet and household item exchange program will be started.

The parents were sent the message that concern for their children and their children's education had prompted these suggested changes. Parents were accepted and welcomed into the schools, and their contributions recognized. The staff honestly and sincerely reached out to the parents and demonstrated their dedication to meeting the students' needs. The program refused to allow parents not to get involved in their children's education. Parents were empowered—given the opportunity to make major decisions concerning programs and academic offerings. Thus the school governing is left largely to this council which, along with the administration and the staff of the school, makes major decisions associated with every aspect of the operation of the program.

In August 1989, the PAIR (Parents Are Important Resources) council was organized. This group consisted of parents, community leaders, a Lynchburg College faculty member, a Youth Service worker, a teacher, a central office representative, and a principal. This council meets on a monthly basis in order to plan and assist in the implementation of the school's program.

The PAIR council has discussed, formulated and approved a school-wide discipline plan, homework policy, field trips and fund-raisers. The members of the guidance subcommittee assisted with the open house and helped develop the guidance survey to identify areas of need for the program. Parents work as bus monitors, supervise the breakfast program, run the parent center, plan and implement the spring carnival, volunteer in classrooms and in the extended day program, participate in workshops in the parent center, and provide refreshments for special activities. The parents helped organize a specialty shop just before Christmas for free shopping. So far, 2,142 hours of service have been volunteered to the school.

One of the major features of this pilot program is a low pupil-teacher ratio. The ratio is held to 15 to 1 in the primary

grades. Also included is the integration of all special education students into the regular education process with the specialists working in the classroom. Another successful feature is the extended day program attended by 97 percent of the school's population. Teachers and assistants, along with community and college volunteers, provide tutoring, guidance, help with homework, and cultural activities. In addition to the previously mentioned emphasis on parental involvement, the program has been enhanced by adult education opportunities and parenting workshops.

Through the PAIR council, partnerships with Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity and Lynchburg Medical Center were established. These partnerships have resulted in homes and health services being provided to needy families in our community. Programs on CPR, poisoning, drug abuse, AIDS, and discipline have been shared with parents. The parent center has been a frequent source of books, videos, and games.

A critical element to the success of our program is early intervention in the form of our prekindergarten for four-year-olds. In our full day program, students experience developmentally appropriate activities adapted from High Scope Curriculum and Peabody Language Development Program. They develop attitudes toward school based on successful experiences in music, speech, movement education, reading and math.

In order to increase the self-esteem of our students, many strategies and techniques were implemented; for example, reciting the school creed daily before classes begin, peer tutoring, weekly recognition of scholastic achievements and good behavior, positive notes and calls to parents, neighborhood involvement, trips and enrichment experiences.

Communication between school and home is essential in any educational environment. This communication is achieved through daily and weekly reports concerning academic

progress and social development. The principal has established an open door policy to the entire community.

Results

The academic objective was to increase the performance level of students entering the first grade instructional programs (1990) as measured by the Metropolitan Readiness Test and a cognitive ability test (CoGAt 1989–90).

The students who entered first grade in September 1990 made significant gains over students entering first grade in the fall of 1989. Students in 1988–89 had an average percentile of 35 percent, compared to 47 percent in 1989–90, a net gain of 12 percent. In 1988–89, only 37 percent of our students were at or above the 50th percentile. In 1989–90 that percentage jumped to 54, a net gain of 17 percent. Our goal for second grade was to increase by 20 percent the number of students who achieve reading levels of 2.2 or above. At the end of the year all second graders scored at or above the 2.2 level in reading. Our goal for fifth graders was to increase by 20 percent the number of students who scored above the 50th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. We exceeded that objective by achieving a 22.2 percent increase. Dearington's minority students scored above the division's average on all subtests with the exception of computation.

After one year of our prekindergarten program we see a marked difference in the behavior and success rate of our kindergarten students.

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An Evening at Home with a Bear Named Corduroy

Eastfield Elementary School

Demographics

- *Eastfield Elementary School, Marion, North Carolina*
- *6500 students/district, 300 students/building*
- *98% white, 1% black, 1% Native American*
- *39% of parents have less than high school education*

Problem

Eastfield Elementary School is located at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in McDowell County, identified by the North Carolina Department of Commerce as one of 20 "severely economically distressed" counties in the state. It is estimated that 20 percent of the county's population is functionally illiterate.

Following a school improvement study at the school, the media coordinator and several of the teachers recognized the need to improve language development of children entering kindergarten. Test scores showed that children coming to Eastfield Elementary are several years behind in language development. Most of the children entering kindergarten were below 4 years of age in language development. There is

also very little parental participation in programs sponsored by the school. We wanted to change both aspects of this situation.

New Practice

The media coordinator and kindergarten teachers researched various studies to gather statistics on the correlation between increased language development and reading by parent to child. Our research indicated that if Eastfield students were going to have more success in school, they must be better prepared when they started learning to read. We were convinced that we must involve parents in a reading awareness program with their children during the kindergarten years. We also wanted to help parents feel more comfortable when reading to their children and to help parents learn simple techniques for reading aloud that would make the reading more meaningful.

Parents were invited to bring their children to a meeting to learn about the "Come Read With Me" program. The goal of the program was to encourage parents and their children to read aloud together in order to improve reading readiness.

Meetings were held at different times during the day in order to reach as many parents as possible. At the first meeting the importance of reading aloud was discussed, and techniques were demonstrated to parents that they could use when reading to their children.

Students were then presented a copy of their very own book, *A Pocket for Corduroy*. A delightful part of this program involves sending Corduroy, a stuffed bear, home for a visit with the family of one of the students. Several times a week, Corduroy gets in his traveling bag and goes home for an overnight visit. In a notebook which accompanies Corduroy, parents write a story about what happens while Corduroy is visiting their home. When Corduroy returns to school, the

teacher shares Corduroy's story with the class. The parents and children have become very enthusiastic about this part of the project and have written some exciting tales of adventure. Parents were asked to keep a list of books which were read each month and to return this list to the teacher. Meetings are being held with parents periodically to keep the enthusiasm for reading growing.

Results

Our kindergarten teachers have been using the *Early Prevention of School Failure* test for several years to record the needs of children entering school. We wanted to see if there had been a direct correlation between this emphasis in reading and a growth in language development. We found that our students have improved significantly in just four months. We have seen a group of students progress from an average of 3 years 8 months to 5 years 3 months.

We are very excited about the progress that our kindergarten students have made. But a more important result has been the interaction of parents with their children, the classroom, the media center, and the school.

Students who used to go to the media center sporadically are now going to the center several times a week to get new books. They are sharing titles of book they like and are "talking about books." Many parents accompany their children to the media center before and after school to get books. We are seeing evidence that older children in these families are reading more, as reflected in an increased book circulation in the media center.

Comments

As we reflect on the growth of our students in their language development, we wish that we has started this type of reading program several years ago. As a result of our success

with the program, the county school district plans to sponsor a similar program for all the other schools in the county.

Contact:

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Eastfield Elementary School
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Marion, North Carolina 28752
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"Celebrating Growth" With Our Business Partner

Hillcrest Elementary School

Demographics

- *Hillcrest Elementary School, Grand Rapids, Michigan*
- *32,000 students/district, 350 students/building*
- *62% white, 32% black, 5% Hispanic*
- *44% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

Our school improvement plan over the past years has focused on specific goals and activities intended to have an impact on student behavior, attendance and punctuality, responsibility, academic achievement, and attitudes. We have seen growth in all areas; therefore last year, in order to recognize the improvement of our students, our staff decided to have a monthly "Celebrate Growth" assembly. We felt that this simple act might raise student morale and, at the same time, motivate some of our students to further improvement. In addition, we wanted to involve our business-in-education partner in this celebration.

New Practice

In order to implement our "Celebrate Growth" assemblies, we sought the input of Cascade Engineering, our business-in-education partner. Together we came up with the ideas for the awards that would be presented at each assembly. We selected ones which were meaningful and motivating, but not expensive. We have listed below the specified areas of recognition, who is recognized and for what, the reward itself, and who provides it.

Conduct:

- Each classroom which has no conduct reports during the month receives from the school a certificate of recognition for their classroom wall.
- The monthly total number of conduct reports for the school is announced and compared with the total at the same time one year ago.
- At the end of the semester, all students in the building with no conduct reports are treated to an entertaining assembly, provided by Cascade Engineering.

Attendance:

- All students who are neither absent nor tardy during the month are given a certificate, with their name and a sticker.
- Students with three consecutive months of perfect attendance, four consecutive months, five, etc., receive special redeemable coupons for items donated by local fast-food restaurants.
- Cascade Engineering provided a huge "Attendance Banner," which is awarded monthly to the room with the highest percentage of perfect attendance and no tardies.

Responsibility:

- A "Responsibility Award" pennant is given to the classroom with the highest percentage of students returning 90 to 100 percent of their homework for the month. They display it in their classroom until the next assembly date.
- At the end of each grading period, Cascade Engineering sends a personal letter of commendation to the parent(s) of each child at Hillcrest who returns 90 to 100 percent of his/her homework for an entire nine-week grading period.

Good Work:

- Each teacher chooses one student per month to be a "Hillcrest KWAGA" (Kid With A Good Attitude). When their names are announced, students come forward to receive a button which says, "I'm a Hillcrest KWAGA!" Their parents receive a letter prior to the assembly inviting them to be present for the award ceremony, but asking them to keep the news a secret from their child. The fourteen students are then treated to a lunch by the PTA and are accompanied to the restaurant by the principal and Cascade Engineering employees.

Results

The results of our monthly celebration have been excellent. The competition among classrooms for the two banners has created quite a boost in attendance and in homework return. The percentages of perfect attendance in winning classrooms have increased from 50 to 72 percent. We have been amazed at the student response to the simple individual attendance certificates. We even have some students who want to challenge us about whether we marked them absent when they really were there!

The percentage of homework return of the winning classrooms has increased from 71 to 82 percent. There has also been a

steady increase in the percentage of homework completed by those classes that didn't win.

Pride and positive self-esteem radiate from the faces of the selected "kids with good attitudes." In addition, the buttons are worn to school over and over. The gains in behavior have not been as dramatic. Although we have about the same number of conduct reports building-wide as we had a year ago, we have experienced a decline in the number of individuals who are receiving them. In other words, a smaller number of students need conduct intervention from the adults this year than last. This we believe to be positive.

Comments

We have added a column in our monthly newsletter which is devoted to "Cel brate Growth" assembly information. This gives further recognition and keeps all parents informed. Parents, staff, and Cascade Engineering are *extremely* positive about our celebrations. One of the top level management people from our business partnership attends each assembly and helps distribute the honors. Our parental attendance increases with each assembly. Not only do the parents of the "KWAGA" kids come to these assemblies, but parents who attended in previous months return to see the latest celebration. This gave us the idea to add a new award, the VIP (Very Important Parent) Award, to give credit to an individual who is assisting at school in some special way. This activity puts the "icing on the cake" for the various goals and activities of our Building Improvement Plan.

Contact:

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Hillcrest Elementary School
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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
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"Rap Into Reading" and More

Byron Kilbourn Elementary School

Demographics

- *Byron Kilbourn Elementary School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin*
- *98,000 students/district; 380 students/building*
- *61% black, 26% white, 8% Hispanic, 5% other*
- *77% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

Citywide testing is mandated by the district. Desired performance levels are defined as the national average on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Metropolitan Achievement Test, and Test of Basic Education (TOBE). At Byron Kilbourn Elementary School, achievement levels in reading, math, science, and language were below the national average.

Discipline problems in the classroom and on the playground, as well as school suspensions and 72's (a department referral card), were at a level that indicated a need to build a positive resource for pupils.

The following problem areas were identified:

1. Low academic achievement in reading,
2. Low pupil self esteem,

3. Need for higher levels of parent involvement/participation.

New Practice

Reading—Kilbourn is known for its special reading incentive programs. The *Rap Into Reading* program was implemented by the reading resource teacher and reading committee.

Students wrote raps about the importance of reading and read their raps for an assembly program for parents and students. This was followed by a three-week period of reading. In preschool, parents read to children. In the grades, children read to their parents. A score card was maintained by parents who validated the cards and returned them to school. Encouragement charts were maintained in each classroom. McDonald's, our corporate sponsor, provided prizes, which were presented at the awards ceremony.

Each spring the same program is called *Sail Into Reading*. The final prize is a sailing trip for parents and students. Both activities increase reading achievement levels and parent involvement.

During our reading incentives, the reading resource teacher makes daily announcements encouraging all students to participate in the program. She makes charts for each classroom and coordinates the reading incentive with the principal.

In addition, help for students was obtained through the assistance of classroom aides. Aides were placed full day in preschool, kindergarten and first-grade rooms, one-half day in all second- to sixth-grade classrooms. These aides work closely with the classroom teacher tutoring individuals and small groups of students.

After-school tutoring was made available three days per week. The program consists of three teachers and three aides to tutor pupils who are at-risk or have been absent and need

to catch up. In-depth tutoring help is provided in mathematics, reading, or language. A maximum of eight pupils are serviced by a two-member adult team (teacher and aide). Parents as well as teachers may assign pupils for after-school tutoring. We have also had a number of students make self-referrals. Chapter 1 teachers work directly with pupils who score below the 39th percentile on citywide testing.

Self-Esteem — The following activities are examples of efforts to build self-esteem. They attempt to offer various options for leisure-time activities, as well as structuring time during the noon hour.

- The *Kilbourn Drill Team* founded by a parent and two staff members. This resource provided a positive method to build school spirit, teamwork and pride. Every student in the school may try out for the team. The pupils assist in selecting the 18 finalists. The Eaglettes have performed in programs and conventions before state and local officials, and for other student groups. Parents are substantially involved in their activities.
- The *Kilbourn Basketball Team* was formed. At present, the team is in first place in Saturday competitions. Parents are actively involved with the team. One parent is a volunteer coach.
- The *Lunch Bunch* program provides a noon hour Computer Club and Crafts Corner. The program is implemented by two school aides. Activities provided enhance self-esteem by helping the students feel special/successful.
- The *career education* program places emphasis on the value of education, goal setting, and positive thinking; through career exploration and exposure to different careers and hobbies, these activities will enhance pupil self-esteem and career choice.

Parent Involvement — Research and inservice programs have shown that positive results in student achievement and discipline are relative to parent involvement and participation. We have a parent liaison who makes home visits and telephone calls daily. She knows the community and can keep a teacher informed about conditions which may affect specific student behaviors in school. She makes home visits when home phones are disconnected or numbers are unlisted. She also makes visits when classroom teachers make referrals regarding missing homework, tardiness, and other home-school contacts. The liaison calls parents to encourage their participation at school activities.

We have made provisions for a parent *Book Nook* because the closest library is 25 blocks from school. A special section of the library has books and tapes of special interest for parents.

A monthly lunch with the principal is a program that enhances parent involvement while it recognizes student improvement. In order to be eligible for the lunch, a pupil must improve in an area such as attendance, academics, or attitude. One pupil from each classroom is a candidate to attend. The child's parent is contacted by the liaison to attend as well. After the luncheon, parents, students and principal participate in an enjoyable activity. It is another opportunity for both parents, students, and principal to interact in a positive manner.

Results

Mandated testing is intense; special state assessments, citywide standardized tests, and staff and parent surveys serve as assessment tools. Test scores have demonstrated overall improvement. Attendance rates and pupil suspension records show improvement. Informal assessments also provide feedback that we are indeed on an upward track. At Kilbourn, for example, the percentage of second graders reading at or above the national average jumped from 17

percent in 1988–89 to 45 percent in 1989–90. In math, the percentage rose from 49 percent to 65 percent.

Comments

The funding for many of these activities and staff to run them comes from a state preschool to Grade 5 program which provides money for inner city elementary schools enrolling large numbers of poor students. The money can be used for student instruction, to hire extra school staff, and to train teachers.

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Charting Students' Progress in Math

Lewis & Clark Elementary School

Demographics

- *Lewis & Clark Elementary School, Pocatello, Idaho*
- *12,000 students/district, 650 students/building*
- *90% white, 6% Hispanic, 4% other*
- *47% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

In 1989, the teaching staff at Lewis & Clark Elementary School began an intensive study of the needs of our school. A team was formed which received training under the sponsorship of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon. The first workshop dealt with compiling a profile of the school in three areas: achievement in specific content areas, student attitude, and social behavior. Attitudinal surveys were conducted of students, teachers and other school staff, and parents. In addition, attendance records were compiled, discipline procedures evaluated, and academic progress was monitored using achievement scores taken from Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). This profile revealed that Lewis & Clark definitely needed to improve in the area of mathematics. The entire teaching staff, including the leadership team, drafted a goal statement:

Students' basic skills performance in math will improve. The long-range goal for the next three to five years will be to have the students meet the 60th percentile on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. The target for the 1990–1991 school year will be to increase performance five percentile points to the 47th percentile on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. The current situation is that the students are 8 points below national average, or at the 42nd percentile.

New Practice

One of the first elements of implementation was to study the Idaho State Department of Education guidelines for mathematics to be sure we were in compliance. At grade-level and cross-grade-level meetings, we examined the state guidelines in order to find duplications and gaps in our mathematics instructional program. As a result, a scope and sequence plan was drafted that specified which concepts are introduced and/or mastered at which grade level. We have also developed a check-off chart that will stay in each student's record so that subsequent teachers can know how much progress each student has made. A computer program will be used to aid in this tracking procedure.

In order to keep parents informed of our goals, our principal conceived an approach that is unique in our school district. A series of parent-teacher classroom meetings and parent-principal meetings were held in September. Parents were invited to attend a meeting at 10:00 a.m. or 7:00 p.m. with the classroom teacher, followed an hour later by a meeting with the principal. The dual times were scheduled so that all parents would have an opportunity to attend. During the morning meetings students were engaged in other activities to free the teacher's time.

These meetings were not intended to be a standard orientation but rather a chance for each teacher to meet parents early in

the year, review textbooks and materials, answer questions and concerns, and discuss academic and behavioral goals and expectations. In this way we were able to describe plans for our mathematics program.

Results

Our goal is long-range; results will be achieved in three to five years. However, focusing on math is already yielding positive changes. In spring of 1990, ITBS scores had already improved from 42nd to 47th percentile. The faculty at Lewis & Clark works as a cohesive unit with sharing and encouragement a daily practice. We have had several mini-celebrations as various steps in the process have been accomplished.

Parents who attended the meetings were enthusiastic and praised the idea as worthwhile. Many commented that it gave them a clearer understanding of school objectives and what we hoped to accomplish.

Comments

We started this project with high hopes, knowing it was not an easy goal to reach, but one that is worth the effort. There have been times when backtracking has been necessary, but one of the main things the Leadership Team has learned is that we do not need to "reinvent the wheel." If we had the whole thing to do over again, we would use surveys and methods that are already available, with modifications to suit our needs.

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Using Learning Styles to Master Sight Words

Sparks Elementary School

Demographics

- *Sparks Elementary School, Pasadena, Texas*
- *35,000 students/district, 762 students/building*
- *65% Hispanic, 32% Anglo, 3% other*
- *62% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

Sight words are high utility words which occur so frequently in our language that a beginning reader needs to learn them as early as possible so that comprehension can take place. It is assumed that these words are introduced and mastered in first grade. Standardized test scores, Individual Reading Inventory scores, and teacher observation revealed that this was not occurring for all students at Sparks Elementary School. In 1989–90, approximately one fourth of the students entering Grade 2 were reading below the 50th percentile according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which had been administered in the spring of the previous year. How could reading achievement of these below-grade-level second grade students be raised quickly and efficiently?

New Practice

The quickest way to obtain sight word mastery is by memorization. Involving the parents in the learning process is a proven successful method. Home reinforcement can mean the difference between school success and failure. Research has indicated that learning styles play an important role in one's ability to internalize information, thus making learning easier.

On the basis of this research, we intended to improve reading performance of our second graders who were below the 50th percentile by:

1. Identifying each student's learning style (auditory, visual, kinesthetic).
2. Developing and using materials to teach sight vocabulary by memorization to each child through his/her identified learning style.
3. Reinforcing the learning process by a home participation program.

Students were individually tested for their preferred learning style. After testing, students were grouped for drill by learning styles—auditory, visual, kinesthetic.

A word list was prepared of 200 selected sight words. These words were presented in groups of 25. Twelve words were presented one week; thirteen words the next. Initial word introduction was done in small groups. Following the initial presentation, small groups, with homogeneous learning modalities were formed for multi-sensory drill, so that the words could be internalized.

The auditory learners were exposed to several different exercises adapted to their style. These included teacher-made language master cards and teacher-made audiotapes

to accompany flash cards in sequence. The children were also paired for drill on the flash cards to help one another.

Visual learners were given the opportunity to write the words on *Write and Wipe* lapboards with markers and to write the words on individual blackboards. Flash cards and a set of letter stamps were used to form the words and write a story. They also used letters inside envelopes to match a word written on the envelope. Teacher-made filmstrips with the words in sequence were also used.

Kinesthetic learners worked on the vocabulary using plastic link letter cubes, magnetic letters on boards, individual charts using cardboard letters to spell the words, and cardboard link letters.

The computer was used by all groups. We were careful to pair an auditory learner with either a visual or kinesthetic learner. A data disk was prepared to accompany a commercial disk called WORD PLAYER. This data disk included the words and the sentences used in the initial presentation which were the same as those sent home weekly for reinforcement.

Each week following the initial introduction, a list of the words presented was sent home containing the same sentences that the teacher read using the words in context. These sentences and word lists were to assist the parents in providing nightly reinforcement at home. Parents were asked to acknowledge that the students had drilled at home on these words. Weekly incentives were awarded to each child for work accomplished at home.

The culminating activity was a "Word-Off" (a contest similar to a spelling bee), presented with parents attending. The first and second place winners of this contest were given trophies. All students received certificates of recognition for their participation.

Results

Comparing the 1988–89 Iowa reading comprehension scores with the 1989–90 scores, there was an overall gain in the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) of +11.39. Of the 24 participating students, three scored above the 50th percentile on the Iowa, confirming that they are now on grade level. All participating students completed their second grade class work successfully and were promoted to third grade. Parents were enthusiastic and complimentary. It gave them a structured program with specific tasks to assist their child. Teacher observation proved that there was transfer of word recognition from drill to readers.

Comments

We believe that the success of this project was based on the following educational principles:

1. Learning was active, not passive.
2. Each child's individual educational need was met.
3. Teaching for mastery was an objective.
4. Positive reinforcement was immediate and continuous.
5. The home was involved in the educational process.

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Middle and Junior High Schools

Catching up to Grade With "PALS"

Challenger Middle School

Demographics

- *Challenger Middle School, Glendale, Arizona*
- *9,000 students/district, 820 students/building*
- *60% white, 36% Hispanic, 3% black*
- *50% transient rate; low-to-middle socioeconomic status*

Problem

The issue of retention is a dilemma facing educators and school boards across the nation. Research shows that only 20 to 35 percent of those retained learn more in the second year, and about 40 percent actually learn less. This indicates that retention is not helping 65 to 80 percent of the students. Evidence continues to accumulate that "another year of the same" helps only a small minority of retained students. Retention lowers motivation and self-esteem and increases the likelihood that the student will eventually drop out of school. Yet automatic promotion without the required skills does students a serious disservice—not to mention drawing fire from the public about lowered, or nonexistent, promotional standards.

Concerned about the high transient rate (50 percent) and the consequences of retention (59 students out of 900), the administration and staff of Challenger Middle School have developed an experimental program called PALS (Parallel Alternative Learning System) for failed and at-risk students.

New Practice

In PALS, retained seventh graders take eighth-grade courses in subject areas they passed the previous year, while remaining in seventh-grade courses they failed. But rather than repeating the entire course curriculum, students work with teachers to develop the specific skills that are lacking. Students also meet daily with a mentor (at Challenger, a teacher's aide) to complete homework assignments, prepare for exams, strengthen study habits, and modify behavior. Students who have been retained and students who are considered at-risk are eligible for the PALS program. The latter are students who are failing academically and whose behavior is considered below standard.

The mentor and teachers from both grades closely monitor a student's progress through frequent team meetings and biweekly progress reports. After the first nine-week grading period, students who have mastered the required seventh-grade skills, are passing their eighth-grade classes, and exhibit appropriate behavior are promoted to eighth grade.

The PALS classes are kept small, (no more than 10-12) so one-to-one assistance is available for specific subject area assignments. PALS also assists students by reinforcing basic learning skills such as:

- being on time to school and to classes
- coming to class prepared (bringing notebooks, paper and textbook)
- completing classroom assignments on time

- completing homework assignments
- communicating with teachers respectfully
- reading and following directions

PALS is implemented throughout the entire school year. If is divided into four nine-week sessions corresponding with the school's academic grading periods.

During the first nine weeks, only students who were retained from the previous year participate in the program. These students see a mentor for one class period a day for a study hall period. Students receive assistance with their homework or with behavior modification. Time is spent on preparation of exams and, in some cases, the students receive encouragement to improve behaviors. Monitoring is done through bimonthly progress reports and direct communication with core-area teachers.

At Challenger Middle School, students receive midterm progress reports. It is possible for a student who has worked exceptionally hard and has displayed the proper behavior to be passed to the next grade at this point. If this does happen, the student will continue to attend the PALS classes and is closely monitored.

At the end of the first nine-week period, the core team meets to decide who has met the necessary requirements for promotion. After a list of possible students is prepared, teachers from both grades meet to discuss these students. This procedure gives the upper grade teachers necessary background information and permits discussion of the students' strengths and weaknesses.

The second nine-week session focuses on two basic areas. The first is the monitoring of students who were promoted. These students are not forgotten after promotion. They are still required to attend PALS classes every day. This has a

two-fold purpose: first, these students will need help, as they are already nine weeks behind in their academics; second, there is a strong tendency for these students to relax once their goal has been achieved. We must continue to establish new goals to keep them on track.

The second area deals with developing a new list of at-risk seventh-grade students. After the core-team teachers identify at-risk students, classes are arranged. The third nine-week session is devoted to helping additional at-risk students identified during the previous session. The same approach is used with these students: they attend PALS classes daily and are carefully monitored. Proper mentoring is provided to help them in the classroom.

During the third nine-week period, the students who were promoted from the first session are still being monitored and can still attend class. However, classes are either made at the request of the student or mentor — whoever feels the classes are necessary. If the classes are too large during this period, the overload can be handled in the last nine-week session. The last nine-week session is designed to handle any overload of at-risk students from the previous session. This is the most critical time, as this is the last session before promotion.

Monitoring and documentation are a very important part of the PALS program. Not only is it important for students to experience success, it is also critical that they see written acknowledgement of that success.

Results

PALS is working beyond our expectations. At the end of the program's first nine weeks, 72 percent of students in PALS (11 out of a total of 16) met seventh-grade promotional requirements and were promoted to the eighth grade. The retention rate has dropped from 59 students to 39 students during the implementation of PALS. In addition, the program

is growing; participation has moved from 16 to 60. Another positive feature of the program is the tutoring assistance provided by "nine-week graduates" to others in the program. Several former PALS students (now 8th graders) assist with peer tutoring several periods a week.

At the end of the first year of the PALS Program, 65 percent of the students met the requirements to graduate or be promoted to the eighth grade without having to attend summer school. Another 26 percent of the students needed summer classes in order to progress to the next grade, and 9 percent of the students were retained.

A survey administered to the 46 students who participated in PALS revealed their strong support for the program. All of them said that it should be continued the following year and that they would recommend the program to other students who are at risk of failing. An overwhelming majority of the students felt that PALS helped them to complete their assignments on time and gave them needed class time to prepare for tests. Most of them believed that they would not have passed their classes without help from the program. More than 80 percent of the students said they would participate in PALS the following year. Asked for suggestions for improving the program some students mentioned a need for more instructors and more class time, but most students said they liked the program just the way it is.

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"Zeroes Aren't Permitted"

Pauline G. Hughes Junior High School

Demographics

- *Pauline G. Hughes Junior High School, Burleson, Texas*
- *5000 students/district, 1200 students/building*
- *95% white, 5% Hispanic, black, Asian*
- *7% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

The major barrier to student academic growth at Hughes Junior High School was a high failure rate, due mainly to students' choosing to take zeroes rather than do assignments. This conflicted with our school's basic belief about teaching and learning as reflected in our mission statement: "Our actions will result in greater student self-esteem and academic growth." In order to make that a reality, we had to vanquish teachers' resistance to change and assist them in becoming student-centered instead of task-centered.

Practice

During the past five years, educators at Hughes Junior High School have been governed by a shared leadership system. Through shared leadership we have developed and regulated campus policy.

In April 1988, a task force initiated a Zeroes Aren't Permitted (ZAP) policy based on the premise that our school would take definitive steps to insure student success. ZAP makes the students responsible for completing all assignments. They are not allowed to accept a zero. Tutoring time was made a part of our regular school day, so all teachers are available to tutor their students who experience difficulty with an assignment. In addition, students in each class have study buddies they can call if they have problems with homework. Reteaching and retesting is accomplished through modified classroom instruction and in-school tutoring. Students attend required or requested 20-minute daily tutoring, plus they have the option of reading or doing homework during that time.

We are stressing the teaching of reading and writing across the curriculum. This strategy has been expanded consistently since the beginning of the 1986 school year. Interdisciplinary efforts include a seventh-grade language arts block, which integrates the previously separate reading and language classes. In the 1990–91 school year, we are developing and implementing a modified language arts and social studies block for the eighth grade. Reading and writing curriculum between these subjects are being correlated in order to interrelate these skills with these two subjects to increase overall student success.

One philosophy of Hughes Junior High School is that if we are to prepare our students to become successful, productive citizens, we must "tear down the school walls" that separate us from our parents, community, and businesses. We have a campus advisory committee, comprised of students, parents, business leaders, faculty, and administrators, which meets to determine areas of needed improvement and then cooperatively develops a plan of action. Additionally, each department on our campus is recruiting parents and business people from our community to form departmental advisory committees. Parents and people from the community are

enlisted as volunteers through the PTO, and they help with registration, chaperoning school dances and performing arts trips, and substitute teaching, so teachers can score assessment writing, and perform clerical jobs in the library. Our school has active booster clubs for choir, band, and athletics. It appears that the more our parents, community, and businesses are included in all aspects of our school, the more they want to be involved.

Beginning four years ago, our school adopted a policy which requires each teacher to make a minimum of ten positive contacts with parents during each six weeks. These contacts serve to emphasize the importance of parents' attitudes toward their child's education at school and the need to continue this effective, positive atmosphere at home.

One of the most successful initiatives to inspire parents is through orientations. Parents of new students are offered a choice of day and time for orientation convenient to their work schedules. Each spring, meetings are conducted by the administration, faculty, and counselors for parents of all incoming seventh graders. At orientations and seventh-grade parent meetings, the parents are given handouts on parenting, a comprehensive reading list, and information about the courses and programs offered to their children. It is of prime importance to educate parents and keep them updated as to the needs of a junior high student. It is also essential to emphasize the necessity for school and parent cooperation. The parents of at-risk children are invited to receptions by the counselors. In a relaxed atmosphere, these parents are offered suggestions for their daily struggles in dealing with their children. In addition, counselors and administrators make home visits, especially for at-risk students.

Results

We have significant evidence of increased student

achievement in the continuous gain in standardized test scores. California Achievement Test total battery percentiles for seventh graders have risen from 48.9 percent in 1986 to 60 percent in 1989. Results showed that 79 percent mastered minimum math skills in 1986, while 92 percent achieved mastery in 1990. The most dramatic gains were on the writing section. In 1986, 55 percent achieved mastery. That figure rose to 92 percent in 1990. Ninth-grade writing results went from 52 percent mastery in 1989 to 77 percent mastery in 1990. Teachers strongly resist any efforts to "teach to the test," but we strive to make our written, taught, and tested curriculum congruent. We also strive to develop alternative and innovative teaching strategies that will take our students beyond the essential elements.

Comments

Our educators are constantly encouraged to become risk takers and to realize that failure is a part of success. By assessing our students' needs and then cooperatively and democratically designing new programs, we are contributing significantly to students' academic success. Strategies were established and implemented through shared leadership, and in this lies the strength and power that have made our programs work. Teachers' morale has risen with the empowerment that enables them to take charge of our school's future.

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Resolving Conflicts With Student Mediators

Lakeside Junior High School

Demographics

- *Lakeside Junior High School, Orange Park, Florida*
- *22,893 students/district, 1,040 students/building*
- *95% white, 5% black*
- *middle-to-upper socioeconomic status*

Problem

A large number of interpersonal conflicts between students that begin as "minor" disputes often escalated into major conflicts at Lakeside Junior High School, resulting in an altercation, a class disruption, or some other activity leading to a disciplinary referral. Furthermore, these referrals were of such a serious nature that it was sometimes necessary to use corporal punishment (as permitted by Florida law).

New Practice

A student mediation program at Lakeside had its beginning in an administrator-counselor staff meeting. The student mediation program is a program in which a student mediator is trained to help other students resolve their conflicts.

Each year's student mediation program actually begins in

the spring of the previous year. First, we get input from current mediators, teachers, administrators, and counselors as to potential new mediators for next year. Then we go through a strict screening process to select the actual candidates for training. The selection process includes asking for input from the school's entire professional staff. After this preliminary screening process is completed, we go into the second phase of our selection and training process.

In the second phase, we begin by asking students to complete an application which includes parental permission for the student to participate in our mediation program. Each candidate who turns in a completed application with parent permission goes through an individual interview, which consists of general questions relating to the candidate's desire and ability to be a student mediator. Then a simulation of an actual mediation is held, with the candidate serving as the mediator while current mediators role-play a conflict situation. Finally, the mediator selection committee reviews the completed applications and individual interview sheets and makes final decisions as to who will be the new mediators.

The initial training is a three-hour session during the spring, conducted by the State Attorney's office. A number of follow-up training sessions are done by the guidance staff, using current mediators. The training process is ongoing and includes a review of each actual mediation with the supervisor of the student mediation program, actual observation of one or two mediations, observation of actual court system mediations, and participation in training sessions for new mediators.

By training new mediators in the spring, we are ready to begin mediation at the beginning of the new school year. We have a brief "refresher" meeting before anyone does an actual mediation. We also will have periodic information and "fine-tuning" sessions about once a month during the year. These meetings are important to develop a sense of camaraderie

and group cohesiveness—factors important in helping the students be more effective mediators.

Any person in the school—student or staff—can make a referral to the student mediation program. Most of the referrals come from the discipline office or directly from a classroom teacher, with a few coming directly from student referrals.

A referral is made to the guidance office—usually to the supervisor of the student mediation program. The supervisor then assigns a mediator to the two students involved in the dispute. The mediator is called to the supervisor's office to be briefed on the particular students involved and the nature of the conflict. The session is brief and is designed to accomplish the following:

- Determine whether or not students are available at that time to conduct the mediation, considering students' classroom obligations (test, review for test, etc.).
- Determine whether or not mediator knows one or both of the disputants to the extent that favoritism or other negative dynamics might be sensed by one of the disputants.
- Help student mediator feel confident going into the mediation.

Steps taken in the mediation process include:

1. Statement of purpose of mediation.
2. Introductions.
3. Statement of ground rules for mediation meeting.
4. Each disputant tells his/her side of conflict.
5. Determination of *actual* problem.
6. Determination of good solution that both disputants can live with.

7. Mediator writes the contract and all participants sign.
8. Disputants dismissed.
9. Mediator completes report.
10. Mediator reviews session with supervisor and returns to class.

Results

The student mediation program at Lakeside Junior High School has enjoyed a great deal of success. The most significant measure of its success is the substantial increase in number of students served by the program. We had 24 mediations in our first year, 67 mediations in our second year, and expected to reach 100 or more mediations by the end of the third school year (1990–91). The mediation program has resulted in a drop in the number of corporal punishment incidents from several hundred a year (before the program started) to two students during the last three years.

Comments

Word of success is reaching out beyond our local school campus. In our own school district we have assisted two other junior high schools to start similar programs. Our school board office has asked us to assist in preparing materials for use in establishing a student mediation program at each of the junior high schools in our district.

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One-to-One Help for ALL Students Who Need It

Portage Central Middle School

Demographics

- *Portage Central Middle School, Portage, Michigan*
- *7894 students/district, 545 students/building.*
- *95% white, 4% black, 1% other*
- *middle class*

Problem

Central Middle School began a School Improvement Plan in September of 1989 with the development of our Mission Statement: "Central Middle School will develop healthy, successful, POSITIVE PEOPLE." Our Mission Statement emphasizes our primary focus for existence and provides the basis of the entire plan. Over the succeeding months the staff developed a composite list of belief statements, long-range goals and short-term objectives.

One of our goals was to create a network of interrelated academic experiences that promote, measure, and insure success. Report cards alone told us that not all students were meeting academic success, and we knew that a positive, successful attitude was not present in many of these same students.

New Practice

Our specific objectives included providing opportunities for remedial academic work on a one-to-one basis, aiding students who have had extended absences, improving organizational skills, providing for transition into and out of existing remediation programs and providing an environment conducive to growth of self-esteem.

In order to implement our objectives we decided to provide tutorial help every class period. The primary method of staffing comes from 14 teachers (two each class period) who cover seven periods per day. This assignment is in lieu of their supervision assignment. In addition to the primary teachers, supplemental help is acquired through university students who either volunteer or have school participation requirements to fulfill. Senior citizens and parents have also been a resource in our attempt to accomplish one-to-one tutoring.

Any student is eligible for tutorial help. Referrals may come through teacher recommendations or student self-referral. Eligibility checks are made each week for all students receiving a D– or E. We have the computer capability to sort students by letter grades and class. Therefore we can easily form tutorial groups. We can also very quickly keep tutorial teachers informed of their students' progress in classes.

Results

We had 38 students involved in tutorial during the first nine weeks. Two students moved. Of the remaining 36, nine students did not have a 1.75 grade point average at the end of that first nine weeks. However, six of those nine students did improve to a 1.75 or better in the next nine weeks.

Of the 36 students in the program for the first two nine-week marking periods, 66 percent improved their grade point average; 13.8 percent improved .5 or better.

There were 36 students in the program at the end of the school year (not all of whom had participated for the full year). Of these, 91.6 percent were achieving a 1.75 or better.

Comments

The key to such a program is a commitment from the staff and a counselor or other designated staff member who has the time and energy to serve as coordinator.

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Rescheduling for Reteaching

Snyder Junior High School

Demographics

- *Snyder Junior High School, Snyder, Texas*
- *3600 students/district, 500 students/building*
- *60% Anglo, 35% Hispanic, 5% black*
- *38% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

During the 1989-90 school year (my first as principal at Snyder Junior High), we began the process of identifying problems related to student achievement. One of the first items considered by the campus improvement team was the pass/fail ratio. We then realized that 33 percent of our students failed one or more classes during the course of the school year. The data used to identify the problem were taken from the grade distribution report calculated at the end of each six weeks, each semester, and at the end of the year.

As these students were identified, the campus improvement team began to examine the issue as to why the students were failing so as to address possible solutions to these questions.

We found the failure rate was due primarily to the following factors:

- incomplete assignments
- failure to complete homework
- falling behind other students in class
- lack of motivation

New Practice

In the spring of 1990, as planning the master schedule for the 1990–91 school year began, the length of each class period was shortened from 50 minutes to 45 minutes. The extra 5 minutes from each class was added to the 20 minutes from homeroom; and a 45 minute reteaching/retesting period, which is called "0" (zero) period, was formed.

All teachers, except math and English teachers, have a "0" period assignment; during which they supervise students in independent study, reading, or homework assignments. Math and English teachers, on the other hand, are required to use their "0" periods to reteach the previous day's lesson to those students who are receiving grades of 75 or below in their classes. These students are identified at the end of the first three-week grading period. In addition, any student who fails a test is retaught and retested during the "0" period.

The teachers turned in lists of students who received a grade of 75 or below. Then, the office assisted in scheduling students, distributing schedules, and getting students situated into the correct room(s) on the correct day(s). The princ.pal talked to all the students in the auditorium to explain the program to them, to get them to understand the reasoning behind it and encourage them to realize that all can be successful. However, it takes some students a little longer than others to grasp certain concepts.

The requirement is that all language arts and math teachers will reteach the previous day's lesson, and any student who fails a test will have the opportunity to take the test again, after the reteaching process has occurred. This allows our students to have two classes per day of instruction in the subject (either math or English) in which they are having difficulty. If a student happens to be failing both English and math, then the days are divided, with the student scheduled two days a week in math, two days a week in English, and the third day the student goes to the subject in which s/he received the lowest grade.

Student organizations can only meet on Tuesdays during "0" period, but any student assigned to reteaching periods must attend that class rather than the meeting. A student must be passing all classes to be allowed to participate in any of our student organizations.

Results

By the end of the first semester of the 1990–91 school year in which this practice was initiated, the success rate was 94 percent; that is, 94 percent of the students passed all their classes after taking final exams. By comparison, the success rate in the 1989–90 school year was 67 percent, (A third of the students failed one or more classes that year).

Outstanding results were noticed in the first six-week grading period of 1990–91 when 270 students (approximately 55 percent) made the "A" or "AB" honor roll. At that time all eighth-grade students were either in Algebra 1 or pre-Algebra. Only five of them failed math during that first six-week marking period. Students who raised their grades to above 75 during the next six-week grading period were exited from the reteaching period.

Comments

No additional training was required by any of our teachers,

other than an explanation about the program and the requirements from the principal. Also, no additional resources were needed to implement the program. Other than making adjustments in the master schedule, no practices were abandoned in our school. However, it is recognized by staff and students that the reteaching/retesting class takes priority over all other meetings and activities.

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At-Risk Students Learn "Tactics for Thinking"

D.C. Virgo Middle School

Demographics

- *D.C. Virgo Middle School, Wilmington, North Carolina*
- *20,000 students/district, 550 students/building*
- *59% white, 39% black, 2% other*
- *36% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

At the end of the 1987–88 school year Virgo Middle School had the highest retention rate in New Hanover County, retaining 20.9 percent of its students. In addition, Virgo had the highest suspension rate (64 percent) in the county, and its average attendance rate was below the county average. Among the six middle schools in New Hanover County, Virgo placed fourth, based on reading and math scores on the California Achievement Test (CAT). All of these factors emphasized the need for an at-risk intervention program.

New Practice

Our "XL" Program at Virgo is a comprehensive, child-centered program which focuses on several areas:

Seventh Grade — *Academic:* 80 percent pass rule, "Tactics for Thinking," study teams, and cooperative learning. *Counseling:* weekly group counseling with emphasis on basic social skills and problem solving, intensive day-long workshops focusing on physical and emotional care of self, problem solving, and communication.

Eighth Grade — *Academic:* 80 percent pass rule, study teams, peer coaching, cooperative learning, "Tactics for Thinking," and cooperative discipline. *Counseling:* weekly group counseling, with emphasis on human relations and self-esteem, and the "Ropes Course."

Yearly we target 25 seventh grade students according to the following criteria:

- grade retentions
- low reading achievement test scores
- poor attendance
- consistently poor behavior
- low grade point average
- bright or gifted child working below average or not attending school
- teen pregnancy or motherhood
- drug or alcohol abuse

After examining the students' cumulative records the counselor selects students most in need of intervention. These students are then assigned to a team of 60-90 students with two or three teachers.

To ensure the academic success of our students we dropped the traditional pass/fail grading system. We replaced it with the 80 percent pass rule—an 80 percent or higher must be made on tests, notebooks, and projects. If an 80 percent is not

achieved, the student must retake the test or redo notebooks or projects until an 80 percent is earned. Incompletes are given on the report card until the work is done. Students can come in before school, during lunch, and after school to redo their work. Rewards are set up for students who pass a test the first time or for all students who have passed all of the required material by the end of the grading period. Our teachers consistently reinforce the message that they care enough to insist that the work gets done. In one case it meant taking a trip to the student's home on a Saturday morning to ensure that a test was retaken.

Students who had previously been unsuccessful in school could not be expected to start performing at the 80 percent level immediately without some support mechanisms. To aid our students in achieving 80 percent in all areas, the teachers developed study teams, which are made up of four students, some previously successful and some previously unsuccessful. These students function as a cooperative learning group and as peer coaches for one another. Our students are held accountable for finding solutions to problems they cause in the classroom, whether it's behavioral or academic.

Since students don't necessarily know how to learn, we incorporated "Tactics for Thinking" which helps them to monitor and focus their attention by aiding them to store and retrieve information, set goals, and assume responsibility for their learning.

In the first week of school, the eighth graders have a four-hour, after-school cooperative learning workshop, coordinated and implemented by the school counselors. During this time the students do many activities that require cooperation and problem solving.

The eighth graders, along with learning to work in teams, take the Ropes Course, an outdoor adventure course which emphasizes developing cooperation, problem-solving skills,

and self-esteem through participation in risk-taking adventures. They also receive group counseling once a week for ten weeks. The groups emphasize the importance of self-esteem in building relationships and getting along with yourself and others.

The seventh graders take part in day-long intensive workshops that are held off campus. These workshops are done by community people with school counselors and social workers facilitating the small group sessions. The workshops are designed to emphasize basic social skills, problem solving and conflict resolution. After each skill is taught and practiced, the students are assigned to carry out that skill. For example, if the students are working on introductions, they must introduce themselves to the principal, who then reports their success to the counselor; if they are working on apologies, they must have proof of making an acceptable apology in writing.

At the end of the school year, various recognition celebrations are held for the students, parents, educators, and volunteers in the program. Programs to award achievement in school are held every six weeks.

Results

The results of the "XL" Program are most promising:

- 1.5 year gain in reading on CAT
- 1.5 year gain in math on CAT
- statistically significant increase (.01) in academic and social self esteem as measured by the Coopersmith Inventory
- 56 percent drop in office referral rate
- attendance rate of 93.6 percent (higher than the school average)

Along with measurable results have come favorable comments from parents, teachers and students. One student said, "Last year I made all D's. No one cared if I failed. This year, in 'XL,' I'm working hard, but I'm also making the honor roll for the first time."

Comments

At the inception of the program we did much research on working with the at-risk child. A 20-hour in-service program was developed for our teachers and staff on the indicators of at-risk children and the strategies for dealing with their problems. We received some grant monies from the state to get our program started.

Schools (at all levels) within our system have adopted parts of the program for their buildings. For example, one of our high schools, hoping to cut its dropout rate, has adopted a 70 percent rule for its ninth graders to ensure that they will pass ninth grade.

"XL" has been a wonderful growth process. Every year we add needed areas and drop ones that don't work. As a result, we have a strong successful program.

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High Schools

Class Assignment:
A School Improvement Survey

Aloha High School

Demographics

- *Aloha High School, Beaverton, Oregon*
- *25,000 students/district, 1650 students/building*
- *90% white, 10% minority*
- *8% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

The school profile shows that many Aloha High School students score above the national average on SAT scores and finish their first year in Oregon universities with a GPA which is, on average, 7 percent higher than students from most other high schools. However, despite the statistics related to Aloha's college-bound students, other indicators have not been so encouraging. From 1988 to 1989 the number of students who earned an F in at least one class increased from 17 to 26 percent. A schoolwide survey revealed that only 15 percent of the students believe teachers care whether or not they learn the material from class; and only 45 percent of the students like to come to school every day. In contrast, the staff survey revealed that, overwhelmingly, teachers are

concerned about student learning; 50 percent of the teachers agreed the curriculum is not up-to-date and not useful to students.

New Practice

In response to these data, the Aloha High School staff spent several long faculty meetings discussing the issues and reaching consensus on a new school goal: to create programs and curriculum that better meet the needs of all students. The staff were convinced that if they made major reforms in curriculum and school programs, more students would be successful and satisfied with their education. What the staff soon discovered, however, was the lack of agreement among themselves as to what students need to learn in order to be successful in school. Many people had strong opinions based on personal experience and reading research studies, but no consensus could be reached on what should be done to meet students' needs. The faculty decided that, in addition to reading educational literature, they would have to go back to the students and the community to research the issue.

The School Improvement Committee organized a small *ad hoc* committee to devise a means for doing the research; however, after six months of meetings and one attempt at surveying parents, no significant progress had been made. Teachers were still committed to the research, so they included action research as one of their major goals for the following school year.

We concluded that understanding the needs of students would require several projects focused on various groups, such as students, parents, businesses, and other community members. We decided to start with students, and we thought that the most powerful way to find out what students wanted from school would be to involve students themselves in the research. The group decided to involve groups of students as interviewers, but a viable plan was needed. Two outside

consultants came to the school for a day to help the group devise a project plan in which students would interview their peers, analyze the data, and write essays summarizing the results. In addition, the teachers developed an interview guide including questions that covered social, academic, and environmental needs of students.

The final plan involved over 300 students in 11 language arts writing classes, which included students from all grade levels and degrees of scholarship and skill. Two members of the planning committee volunteered their classes, and they, in turn, recruited four additional teachers to participate. Teachers were willing to participate because they wanted to contribute to the school goal, but also because the project tied in with the course objective that students write an analysis paper. Several commented that this would be a rare opportunity for students to learn and engage in meaningful social research.

Participating teachers agreed to do the project within a three-week period but were free to vary the schedule to meet the needs of their individual classes. They also agreed that students would use the question guides developed during the pilot interviews, but they would have the freedom to add probing questions during the interviews. Members of the committee whose classrooms were not involved prepared materials for use in the project: an outline of the research steps and procedures, instructions for conducting interviews, interview guide questions, and personal reaction sheets. At a later meeting, teachers received training on how to conduct open-ended interviews so they, in turn, could train their own students.

Students worked in pairs for the four interviews. Each student acted as questioner for two interviews and as recorder for two interviews. When students wrote their papers, each used the information from the interviews in which he or she had been the questioner. They did all interviews and writing

outside of class time. In addition, committee members with research experience made themselves available to assist in classes upon teacher request.

Teachers made a copy of each student paper and journal. One copy was graded as a research assignment and returned to the student, and the second copy was collected and used as data in the analysis.

The day-by-day procedure for the unit was as follows:

DAY	ACTIVITY
1.	Introduce the unit: purpose, definition of research terms, overview of schedule and process.
2.	Train students to conduct interviews.
3.	Students conduct interview #1. In some cases, teachers arranged for students to interview students from other classes. Other teachers allowed students to recruit peers in the halls and student center.
4.	Interview #2.
5.	Class debriefs interviewers. Students kept logs in which they wrote preliminary interpretations of interviews.
6.	Interview #3.
7.	Interview #4.
8.	Debrief interviewers; share interpretations; identify emerging themes; write logs.
9.	Decide themes for discussion; determine color code for theme identification; using color code, highlight significant quotes in interview notes.
10.	Class time to work on the paper.
11.	Paper due.

Results

Some of the results of the action research project revealed that:

- Students expressed a strong desire and need for positive communication with the staff.
- Students spoke frequently of the importance of a variety of teaching methods and the desire for options, such as class offerings, schedules, activities, projects. Almost all students expressed a strong dislike of the lecture method of instruction.
- Students overwhelmingly favored teaching methods that included active involvement, opportunities to work in groups with peers, hands, on laboratories, and discussions.
- Students tended to do better in classes where they knew what was expected of them and received positive reinforcement.
- Students expressed a dislike for what they see as busy work and would like to be told why certain learnings are important.
- Students stated overwhelmingly that the individual teacher had the ability to make class a warm, inviting, and challenging experience, or a cold, oppressive, and numbing experience.
- Students also indicated that some form of sports program should be available to any interested student, regardless of natural sports talent.

Comments

If we were to do the project over again, we would try to pilot the student project with one or two classes to work out the small problems before doing it with 300 students. We would be sure to clarify that students are looking for both good and

bad qualities of school; some of our students assumed that they were required to find things that needed fixing. Students also felt they could do a better job if they took their own interview notes.

The research project promoted lots of communication between student and teacher researchers and their peers. At the debriefing session, teachers' reactions ranged from satisfied to enthusiastic about the results of the student project. Teachers all agreed that most students reacted positively to the project. The general quality of the papers were good; even students who failed to turn in other essays completed this assignment. Making their voices heard was perhaps the most powerful aspect of the project for the students.

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Fewer Failures With Team Teaching

Newton High School

Demographics

- *Newton High School, Newton, Kansas*
- *3360 students/district, 940 students/building*
- *86% white, 10% Hispanic, 3% black, 2% Asian*
- *20% from lower socioeconomic status families*

Problem

A large number of students were not experiencing success in freshman English. Freshmen have two choices for enrollment in English—regular or college prep. Students enroll according to their own choice after advisement from teachers and counselors. The data which revealed the existence of the problem were letter grades earned by the students in the regular English course. In the years *prior* to the intervention, the grade distribution for regular English was:

A – 4%; B – 18%; C – 29%; D – 22%; F – 27%

Clearly, a 49 percent D-F rate was alarming.

When the staff was confronted with the above data, the question was asked, "What can be done?" The answer was to

be found within one of the effective schools correlates — High Expectations for Student Success.

New Practices

Our response to the problem was to team-teach all regular freshman English classes. We moved away from one teacher and 25 students in a classroom to two teachers and 40 students in a classroom. The previous eight sections of freshman English, spread across a seven-period day, were condensed into four periods. The only training involved was between the two teachers themselves — conceptualizing the idea, mapping strategies, deciding on teacher strengths, etc.

During a typical class period, one teacher is presenting material, much as any teacher would, while the other teacher is circulating the room, making sure all students are on task, checking for understanding, and answering questions. At the end of an instructional unit, if some students show signs of inadequate mastery, one teacher will take this group to another room for remediation, while the other teacher does enrichment work with the remaining students.

The teachers keep extensive documentation on every student and call home to a parent any time that a student fails to turn in a daily assignment. Parents are kept informed through regular school mailings, but the teachers supplement those with frequent phone calls and their own mailings. Parent response has been very good. Students are frequently kept informed of their progress and asked to come in before or after school, during break, or at lunch, to get help with their studies. Two days a week, the teachers work at school into the evening, updating student progress, preparing the next week's work, contacting parents, and preparing supplemental mailings home.

Results

The overall feeling was one of "we can do it." The students were more on task, completed more work, displayed more motivation to learn, and were more successful when compared to previous years. What began as a vision of two teachers became a reality soon after the school year began. The success of the intervention was measured in the letter grade distribution at the end of the year:

A – 24%; B – 38%; C – 22%; D – 13%; F – 4%

The team teaching approach, while producing dramatic improvement in student grades, enjoyed widespread acceptance and support from students and parents. Students who had not experienced success with English were now receiving some of their best grades in the subject. It was much easier dealing with parents whose students were successful. Student comments about the class ranged from "you believed in me!" to "when you told us something, you stood behind what you said." The teachers provided discipline and honesty couched in fairness.

Because of their success, the teachers are enthusiastically continuing to improve their team teaching in freshman English. Plans are now underway to expand this approach into sophomore English.

Comments

As you read the description of our intervention, you will notice that we did not implement new or flashy ideas. What we did was to simplify the situation by bringing our new knowledge gained through the study of the research on effective schools together with our existing staff and resources to produce tremendous, positive gains in student outcomes.

Our example can serve as one for all schools. We did not bring in outside help, and we did not require new resources. But we

did change our outlook on ourselves, our students, and our jobs. We did what any school and staff can do, if they only believe in themselves and the students and have high expectations for student success.

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Project ASPIRE Brings Kids and Books Together

Pearl River High School

Demographics

- *Pearl River High School, Pearl River, New York*
- *1700 students/district, 700 students/building*
- *80% white, 15% Asian, 5% black and Hispanic*
- *60% of parents have high school education*

Problem

National reports indicate that students do very little reading in school or for homework. Furthermore, their interest in books decreases as they progress through school. Television is a higher priority for students than reading. By the time the average American student graduates, little time is spent on reading activities beyond those required by the normal school day.

These data provided some insight into national trends. But we wanted a more precise picture of the reading habits of our students at Pearl River High School. Thus, a questionnaire was constructed which asked questions similar to those in the national survey; it was administered to every student, Grades 4–12, in the district.

Concerned by the results of the survey, the Pearl River School District introduced a campaign to address the alarming number of students who were not book-oriented.

New Practice

Project ASPIRE (All Students Participating in Independent Reading Experiences) was launched at Pearl River High School to supplement the regular reading program in English for Grades 8 through 12.

Project ASPIRE appears to be a simple program. During each of the four marking periods, students choose a book from a supplementary reading list. These books are part of a core of literature that has been identified and selected by the English department to meet the following criteria:

- It should reflect congruence with curricular content in English (e.g., 10th grade, British literature; 11th grade, American literature, etc.) and social studies.
- It should include classical literature with high interest level.
- It should appeal to the heterogeneity of our school population.
- It should remain independent of the required readings of the English curriculum.

The program received input from a variety of school personnel; the English department staff generated the book lists and monitoring devices; social studies teachers were asked for their input in the selection of books that were congruent with the social studies curriculum. The school librarian participated by preparing an inventory of the books that were included in the book lists to determine which of the books were available in the school library. The PTA was contacted, and representative books were ordered for the student/ parent-run GO store, so students could have the opportunity

to purchase their books. The school resource labs, which assist students on a tutorial level with reading and writing skills, were contacted to support the program by allowing additional time for students having difficulty with comprehension or needing additional reading time.

Students choose one book for each marking period from their supplementary reading list. At a specified time, teachers assess the students' participation through a number of activities which are left to the discretion of each teacher. These activities include:

- oral presentations to the class
- written reports
- critical essays dealing with characterization, theme, etc.
- critical book reviews
- class discussions
- teacher/student dialogues
- objective assessments

Results

A comparison of library book circulation before and after ASPIRE was implemented shows a 12.5 percent increase in nonfiction and a 46 percent increase in fiction. The district now has a literacy profile of its students which provides the baseline data to be used for comparing the effects of ASPIRE after the first year of implementation was completed. With every student participating in this program, a Pearl River eighth grader will have read an additional 28 classics (including two each summer) by the time s/he graduates.

Comments

Through a number of discussions that have taken place between students and staff members, it appears that students

are enjoying the supplementary reading activities. Parents are also pleased to see the students reading beyond the required expectations of the school program.

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School Within a School for At-Risk Students

Plainedge High School

Demographics

- *Plainedge High School, Massapequa, New York*
- *2600 students/district, 823 students/building*
- *98% white, 2% Asian*
- *middle class*

Problem

Plainedge High School offers a variety of programs on different levels: honors, Regents, and general academic. However, our high school dropout rate and the percentage of students not succeeding in the regular mainstream indicated there were a number of students in our school not adequately serviced by any of these programs who needed a different approach to learning. These at-risk students cannot function effectively in the mainstream high school environment but do not qualify for special education placement.

We have established an alternative program for those students who are not "classifiable," but who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- multiple failures

- irregular attendance
- cutting or truancy
- anti-social behavior

New Practice

As a result of this identified need, the Alternative Learning Program (ALP) was started. The program is for Grades 9–12 and is a teacher-run program that has developed a school within the school. The program is housed in its own space, but in the same building as the mainstream program. Students are block-scheduled for the first five periods of the day within the ALP Suite. Afterwards, students return to the mainstream to attend periods six through eight which includes their lunch and their electives. The ALP school day has been changed in several ways to meet the needs of the at-risk student. Some of the changes include:

1. Class periods of 30 minutes instead of the regular 42 minutes.
2. The formation of an extended homeroom (family time), where all students and staff meet every day.
3. Breakfast time (14 minutes) each day where students may buy breakfast.
4. The development of our own discipline code. ALP students are disci-plined by the ALP team and not the mainstream administration.
5. The staff has a 40-minute planning period each day. All full- time staff members meet to discuss students and program and to conduct parent and student conferences.

The program consists of social studies, English, math, science, art, and health. The majority of these sections are bridged. Each student is taught on an individualized basis. Students are permitted to work at their own pace, work independently, and in groups. All students are encouraged to perform at their

highest academic level. In addition, training in the vocational area is provided.

The selection of the ALP team is an important factor in the success of the program. The ALP team consists of teachers, guidance counselor, social worker, and one administrator. This team then pro-vides the opportunity to develop social and academic skills successfully.

A student may be recommended to the program by a referral from any one of the following people: school administrator, teacher, nurse, guidance counselor, parent or student. A student may enter the program after the process of review has been completed. This process includes a review by the building-based team which includes an administrator, social worker, attendance teacher, guidance counselor, school psychologist and school nurse. If a student is recommended by the building-based team, then the ALP team reviews students for possible ALP placement. Those students accepted by the ALP team will then be interviewed by the team. If the interview is positive and the student wants to be in the program, a parent conference is scheduled. At this conference both parent and student sign a contract that outlines their commitment to the program. Once in the program, each student is now the responsibility of the ALP team. The team will handle all academic and disciplinary matters.

The ALP team makes every effort to personalize each student's education. Class sizes are kept small. A team approach is used toward every aspect of their school day. The team is completely aware of the needs of each student. Case conferences with students and parents are an integral part of the program.

Results

Our ALP program has been in existence for five years. Its establishment has helped the at-risk student earn a high

school diploma. According to the end-of-the-year report, ALP students have improved in their attitude toward school, attendance, deportment and academic achievement. Their personal relationships at home and at school have also improved. The program has had a positive effect on the high school dropout rate.

Data from parent and student evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. In response to a questionnaire, students indicated that ALP teachers are fair, concerned, and enable students to learn. Also, an analysis of the data concerning number of failures, misconduct and absences from school shows that these diminish the longer the students stay in the program.

Comments

Funding for the program is included in the regular school budget. The Plainedge school board has been very supportive in providing the necessary resources for a successful alternative learning program. In addition, the school district has made provisions for the inclusion of our own budget. The monies from this budget allows us to develop a program that is more personalized.

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Detracking English Classes

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Demographics

- *Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Prairie View, Illinois*
- *2000 students/building/district*
- *91% white*
- *middle- to upper-middle class*

Problem

In recent years, there has been substantial criticism of ability grouping. A growing body of research refutes long-standing assumptions about ability grouping and cites evidence of many undesirable and negative effects, primarily in lower-level classes. These research findings provided the impetus for an assessment of Stevenson High School's ability grouping practice within the core curriculum. We found that:

- Movement between ability groups was infrequent.
- Student achievement in the higher-level groups was high.
- Student achievement in the lower-level groups was poor.
- The curriculum of the lower-level classes had become "watered down."

- Students in lower-level classes were less motivated than students in higher-level classes.
- Students placed in lower-level groups remained in lower-level groups year after year.

It became obvious that our ability grouping design was not promoting success for lower-ability students. In fact, it was perpetuating their lower-level status. We realized we must find a way to modify our ability grouping practices in order to promote greater success for lower-level students, while maintaining the successful programs for the higher-level students.

New Practice

The decision was made to initiate a pilot reform project in the English Department. In 1989–90, the lower-level ability groups (basic and modified) were eliminated in the junior-year English classes. Students who had been scheduled for these lower-level groups were placed in the regular (college preparatory) level. The upper levels (accelerated and honors/advanced placement) remained intact. We did not eliminate ability grouping; rather we began our reform efforts by modifying existing ability grouping practices. This decision resulted in significant changes:

- Students in all sections of junior-year English received the same general content.
- Lower-achieving students were no longer subjected to diminished expectations or "watered down" material.
- Extensive support services were established to help lower-achieving students meet the expectations of these more demanding classes.

Support services consisted of mandatory tutorials in composition and reading for any students unable to demonstrate proficiency in these skills. The tutorials meet

three times each week in place of a student's study hall or unscheduled time. They were conducted in the school's reading/writing center by teachers in lieu of study hall supervision. Students were required to continue attending the tutorial only until they could meet the criteria of demonstrating composition proficiency by writing a successful, multiple-paragraph essay and by maintaining at least a C– average in their English classes.

Results

Half of the students who would have otherwise been placed in below-average ability groups met the criteria within 12 weeks. By the end of the first semester 80 percent of the students demonstrated proficiency. This was significant, as students were passing a course with higher expectations and more challenging content than would have been the case under the former system.

Because of its success, the program was expanded to Freshman English in 1990–91. Again, lower-achieving students were placed in the regular level. The only exceptions were the relatively few (4–5 percent) students with learning disabilities serious enough to impair learning in a regular classroom environment.

At the end of the first three-week student assessment, any freshman with less that a C– average is closely monitored by the teacher. If by the end of the sixth week, the student has not raised his/her average, s/he is assigned to tutorial sessions that stress reading and study skills. These sessions also take place in the reading/writing center under the direction of English teachers. Students are required to attend three times a week during their study hall until their grade average is at least a C–.

While this expanded program is still in its infancy, it, too, is meeting with significant success. More than half of the

students originally assigned to the study/reading skill tutorials have been able to return to their regular study hall and are earning at least a C– in their college preparatory English classes.

Comments

The tutorial support program has been successful in supplanting lower-level ability groups. It allows students equal access to course content and places them in a more positive classroom environment. It does not require students to continue in a remedial situation any longer than necessary because they are not bound by the conventions of semesters or Carnegie units. As soon as proficiency is demonstrated and criteria are met, the required tutorial ends. It is important to note that the tutorials are continually available, even after students have met expectations, but on a voluntary basis. Students are reminded and invited to drop in at the center whenever they need assistance. Well over half of the students receiving instruction in the center are not assigned as part of the tutoring program but come into the center voluntarily.

Clearly, programs of this type require a philosophical commitment and a commitment of resources, both human and financial:

- Teaching staff must be provided.
- Workshops, meetings, and inservices must be arranged on a continuing basis to maintain teacher tutorial skills.
- An appropriately equipped site, able to accommodate one to three tutors and up to 15 students, must be available throughout the school day.

Computers are definitely an asset in a tutorial center, but their purchase should not dominate the planning or the program itself.

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Note: For more information on Stevenson High School's modification of grouping practices, see:

DuFour, Richard P., and Wendell Schwartz. "Addressing the Tracking Controversy by Promoting Educational Opportunity." *NASSP Bulletin*. Vol. 74, No. 530, December, 1990, pp. 88–94. (Abstracted in *Effective Schools Research Abstracts*, April 1991, Vol. 5, No. 8.)

School District

Helping Principals to Redefine Their Roles

Deer Valley Unified School District #97

Demographics

- *Deer Valley Unified School District #97, Phoenix, Arizona*
- *16,000 students/district*
- *91% white, 5% Hispanic*
- *11% free/reduced lunch*

Problem

Schools that are effective require administrators who are more than just facility managers. They must become instructional leaders who can help teachers to be more effective in their classrooms and can help schools to be more accountable to the public. Traditionally in the Deer Valley Unified School District #97, principals have stayed out of the classrooms. They concentrated on the administrative tasks of running the facilities and more or less ignored the management tasks of supervising teachers or monitoring instructional techniques and curriculum management. Classroom observations consisted of one 30–45 minute observation per year with nothing for the teacher to look at beyond a one-page checklist with no written comments.

Clearly, the school leaders of Deer Valley needed to become

more involved. As we began redefining our principals' roles seven years ago, several important issues came to light: inadequate staffing, conflicting job responsibilities, and, above all, uncertainty about what the role of the principal should be when s/he is in the classroom. Administrators' lack of training in current effective instruction techniques and their need to upgrade discussion skills were major obstacles for us. It was obvious that we needed retraining to assume the role of true instructional leadership.

The reluctance of some of our school administrators to support the project in its first year was nothing compared to the misgivings of the teachers themselves. They were accustomed to an "invisible" administrator—one who always did a good job troubleshooting problems that arose from time to time, but who never got involved with what teachers were doing in the classrooms. Frequent visits by the principal were seen as an intrusion—or even a threat—by teachers who were accustomed to a token annual evaluation observation.

New Practice

Deer Valley Unified School District recognized the need to redefine the role of its principals and began an Instructional Leadership Training Program. The program included an innovative approach, designed to save its principals from institutional extinction. At the beginning of the project's first year, we located a consultant who had developed a strong clinical supervision program in his own school district. His experience kept us from making the same mistakes he had made. At first, not everyone was totally committed to the project, but as we worked together throughout the year, many of the doubts and misgivings began to disappear. It became clear to all of us that this was the right direction to take.

Our original training began by looking at the research on effective and less-than-effective teaching techniques. A

common vocabulary was developed via Madeline Hunter's Theory into Practice Model. As our understanding of effective teaching increased, we began training on our discussion techniques. We practiced our skills on each other before working with our staffs by viewing a teaching videotape of one administrator teaching a lesson. Then one of us was selected to have a conference with that administrator on the lesson. Discussion from the whole group followed each conference to help us refine our skills.

This process is continuing twice a year with each administrator. I observe each principal in a live observation and conference with a teacher on that principal's staff. The principal and I then discuss the conference after the teacher has gone, thus providing immediate feedback on the principal's skills.

Ongoing workshops have been given to the administrators of Deer Valley each year since the initial training. This allows for our continual growth and understanding of new teaching techniques and curriculum development.

Results

Deer Valley is in a rapidly growing section of metropolitan Phoenix where new schools open each year. Therefore, a new administrators' training component was needed. To date, 32 new administrators have gone through our year-long training program. Before reporting to their schools new administrators begin their first week in an intensive 40-hour workshop designed to teach them our program. They then meet once each month to continue their training and discuss how they are progressing with the other new administrators in the group. At each year's end the group has a graduation ceremony to help celebrate and recognize their acquisition of new skills.

Today, district teachers are observed an average of five times

before their final summative evaluation is written for the year. To help bring about this change, all of us made short walk-through visits to classrooms. This has helped in two ways: It accustomed the teachers to seeing us in the classroom and helped us get used to redesigning our schedules to make classroom visits an important part of our daily routine. At first, these short observations lasted anywhere from three to ten minutes each and were followed by either written or oral feedback. Our teachers now have high expectations that our instructional leaders will offer help and guidance to them in their classroom efforts.

Faculty meetings also underwent visible changes within the district. Instead of the usual format of reviewing the monthly happenings, mini-inservice training on teaching techniques and curriculum issues became new agenda items of the day. Many of these inservice experiences were conducted by principals with the help of teachers who were identified as having specific skills in the areas presented. To get an idea of how our principals are spending their days, I have been keeping a log of my own school visits since 1986. The chart below records the visits I made to schools and the activities of administrators I observed during that four-year period.

Comments

As you can see, our building principals spend a large part of their day being visible on campuses and in classrooms, as well as working with teachers. The Instructional Leadership Training Program has given them the skills to be this kind of leader. Within seven years we have been able to go from managing buildings to developing and utilizing skills that make our schools more effective for the students we serve.

Our program was recognized by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) as one of the top five staff development programs for 1989–90.

Deer Valley Unified School District
Instruction Department
School Visits, 1986–1990

Record of Associate Superintendent's Visits to Schools

1986/87 (14 Schools)

28 Building Administrators
621 Visits, Average of
44 Visits per School
43 Minute Average per Visit

1987/88 (15 Schools)

30 Building Administrators
729 Visits, Average of
49 Visits per School
34.5 Minute Average per Visit

1988/89 (16 Schools)

32 Building Administrators
813 Visits, Average of
51 Visits per School
37.4 Minute Average per Visit

1989/90 (16 Schools)

33 Building Administrators
737 Visits, Average of
46 Visits per School
42.9 Minute Average per Visit

Record of Principals' Activities

	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	
1.	7.0%	6.4%	6.8%	7.7%	Meeting with a parent or on phone with a parent
2.	14.7%	18.7%	19.9%	15.9%	Meeting with a teacher
3.	8.8%	6.5%	7.5%	9.7%	Meeting with a student
4.	30.2%	33.3%	36.7%	36.7%	Out on campus, classroom visits, observations
5.	2.5%	1.8%	1.7%	3.1%	Off campus at district office
6.	2.5%	1.8%	2.8%	1.9%	Off campus on field trip with class or group of students
7.	.2%	.6%	.4%	.3%	Interviewing
8.	14.6%	9.7%	8.7%	5.7%	In office doing paperwork
9.	7.0%	4.7%	4.1%	3.4%	Off work, professional day, vacation day, sick day
10.	8.6%	10.6%	7.5%	8.9%	Meeting with other campus administrator or district office administrator
11.	4.0%	5.9%	3.8%	6.9%	Meeting with office staff, maintenance, nurse, etc.

I have found items 2, 4, and 8 to be instructional leadership areas in which our principals tend to work. Item 2 generally involves meeting with a teacher on classroom instruction, pre- and post-conferences, etc. Item 4 is the time spent out on campus and, in most cases, in classrooms, doing observations. Item 8 represents, in most cases, the writing of formatives and summative evaluations.

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